

Von Hoffman

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The Best

Washington

ASKED Hugh McDonald how we were supposed to know he wasn't just loonied out. The press release on his book about JFK's murder said he was Chief of Detectives in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department when he retired, that he'd been a part-time spook for the CIA for 20 years, that he'd written three textbooks used in police academies, but even if it is true, he could still be loonied out.



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He doesn't look like a nutcake, or at least he doesn't look like what we used to think nutcakes look like. The hair is short, the suit is pressed, the shoes are shined, the socks are white and the general manner is one of an amiable, college-educated flat-foot. The only trouble

he says he's had high tea in London with the man who murdered John Kennedy and the guy's name wasn't Lee Harvey Oswald.

These days we've learned the more proper the credentials, the more imposing the title, the more responsible the story, the better the chance the guy's lying. The most compelling part of McDonald's story is that it's so fantastic.

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BRIEFLY, HE says that one day he was in the office of his CIA "mentor," a certain Herman Kimsey, now deceased, when a third man came in the room, kicking up a fuss about something or other. When the man left, this Mr. Kimsey told McDonald the chap in

the White House had been shot. McDonald says he went to Kimsey with a rifle and a bag of dynamite, who McDonald says was the Chief of Analysis and Intelligence. McDonald says he'll tell him the story but will have to leave McDonald repeats it.

According to McDonald, Kimsey then said Kennedy wasn't killed by a gunman in the Texas Book Depository but by a rifleman, our Mr. X, the world's greatest assassin, shooting dead ahead from the railroad tracks. McDonald also says he was told how he could find Mr. X, which our sleuth set out to do.

He found him in a London hotel, and while our putative killer was loath to give his name he said yes, I did it, did it with my own little bow and arrow for 60 grand, which even by 1963 prices doesn't seem like a terrible lot of money. X, who McDonald says had a kind of Ukrainian accent, said he was hired in Guatemala at a CIA staging camp for some kind of monkeyshines by a fellow named "Troit." This Troit is only identified as an American and an "industrial saboteur."

He also says, "I don't say the CIA officially ordered the assassination of Kennedy, but somebody in that organization was in on it. Maybe he was a rogue, but somebody in that Agency had to do it, and I don't rate out the Agency."

Given the Agency's record on trying to hit Castro, it would be logical to exclude it as a suspect. On the other hand, you could argue that even a CIA agent will hit a head of state if he shoots often enough.

FOR WHATEVER it adds to McDonald's believability, he was Barry Goldwater's chief of security in 1964 — Goldwater's office confirms it — but that matters less than getting somebody to snap out of his lethargy and reopen the investigation. The same goes for the assassination of Martin Luther King. It is ridiculous to rest that case on an investigation conducted by an agency that was trying to drive the victim to commit suicide.

Nobody believes the official explanations for these murders and the longer a competent and credible investigation is delayed the more people think it was our government that did it.